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Thinking Contemporary Art through Mokuhanga

Ruth Pelzer-Montada

Today, the best-known Japanese woodblock prints are 'nishiki-e', the multi-coloured woodblocks created in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the genre of ukiyo-e or 'pictures of the floating world'. In the words of the artist Rebecca Salter (b. 1955), 'the floating world' is a Buddhist concept referring 'to the illusory or sensory world and the transitory nature of life. The wealthy class of merchants in the business areas of Japan's big cities reinterpreted it as the enjoyment of all the pleasure of life'.[1] 'Mokuhanga' is the generic term for Japanese woodblock prints; 'moku' meaning 'wood' and 'hanga', print.[2] In mokuhanga, water-based pigments are brushed onto the woodblock, rather than the oil-based pigments applied with a roller in the Western tradition. Instead of a printing press a flat, circular tool known as a *baren* is then used to press the paper onto the prepared block. Historically, a publisher employed an artist, blockcutters and printers to fashion mokuhanga prints for commercial distribution. In the twentieth century, this division of labour became largely, if not exclusively, relegated to the reproduction of Edo-period nishiki-e. In contrast, artists of the Creative Print movement, or Sōsaku-hanga, of early twentieth-century Japan conceived, cut and printed their work themselves, following a mode of artistic production inspired by the modern Western model of artistic creation. At least that was the aim, if not always the practice. From the 1930s onwards most of the Japanese artists using print techniques were trained at universities.[3] Today, mokuhanga plays a minor role in the work of the best-known Japanese artists, although it continues to be taught and practiced in Japan.

In the second half of the twentieth century, and especially since the 1980s, mokuhanga began to be adopted in the West, possibly as a reflection of the longstanding Western fascination with the arts and crafts of Asia.[4] The necessary specialist tools and materials became readily available, and their relatively low cost made this printmaking technique cheaper than most of the alternatives. The added safety and low environmental cost of mokuhanga's water-based colours mixed with rice paste may also have contributed to its appeal. In an increasingly internationalized world, Western artists would travel to Japan to learn the technique of woodblock printing.[5]

The mokuhanga prints of British abstract painter Rebecca Salter and Australian multimedia artist Brook Andrew (b. 1970) illustrate the distinct and diverging characteristics of this artistic practice in the broader context of global contemporary art. The adoption of mokuhanga by these two particular artists raises larger questions about the role of skill and physical and conceptual labour in the production of art.

Salter has a deep commitment to and understanding of Japanese art and culture. Her abstract paintings, prints and architectural designs are associated with a specific moment in the encounter of post-war Western artists with Asian and particularly Japanese ideas and cultural and artistic practices.[6] Andrew, in contrast, has no explicit affiliation with Japan or mokuhanga. He is half-aborigine and is known for his critical questioning of the portrayal of Indigenous Australians and Australia's colonial past. His work is also shaped by his interest in mainstream popular culture and media. For example, the screenprint *Peace, the Man and Hope*, of 2005, appropriates striking modernist graphic design familiar from advertising, retro cigarette packaging and a black-and-white image of Indigenous Australian sports star Anthony Mundine (fig. **##1**). It also features

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1 R. Salter, *Japanese Woodblock Printing*, London, 2001, p. 10.

2 A. Vollmer, 'Mokuhanga International', *Art in Print*, II, no. 2, July–August 2012, p. 4.

3 L. Smith, 'Japanese Prints 1868–2008' in J. T. Rimer and T. M. McCallum, *Since Meiji: Perspectives on the Japanese Visual Arts, 1868–2000*, Honolulu, 2012, pp. 361–407.

4 *The Third Mind: American Artists Contemplate Asia, 1860–1989*, edited by A. Munroe, New York, 2009.

5 Vollmer, op. cit., pp. 4–13. Vollmer's essay traces the practice of mokuhanga during the twentieth century up to the present day both within and outside Japan.

6 S. Ohki 'Rebecca Salter and Japan: Moments Layered in Time, Space, Color, and Line' in *Rebecca Salter: Into the Light of Things*, edited by G. Forrester, New Haven, CT, and London, 2011 (hereafter *Into the Light of Things*), pp. 51–69.

1. Brook Andrew, *Peace, the Man and Hope*, 2005, screenprint, 1,510 x 2,520 mm (Melbourne, Monash University Museum).

simplified geometric motifs derived from dendroglyphs of the Indigenous Wiradjuri people which were originally cut into tree trunks.[7]

Andrew's series *Danger of Authority,* of 2009, is the focus of this inquiry. In addition to three screenprints (fig. **##2**) and seven lithographs (fig. **##3**), the series includes two mokuhanga prints (figs. **##4** and **##5**). The sources for the series are some pages from lifestyle journals of the 1950s that Andrew found in New York during a six-month ISCP Australia Council Residency in the city in 2008/09.[8] He explains:

> I found the archives in a reverse cycle garbage place in New York that artists and other people visit for second-hand free materials. The archives consisted of at least five folders with handwritten labels. The folders contained interior examples from the turn of the century up to the 1970s. This is all the information I have, no name of the archivist or interior designer that would have probably collected the images.[9]

The images in faded halftone show extravagant and expensively decorated interiors, some of them historical, in both the USA and Britain. Superimposed onto each image is a contemporary headline taken from the *New York Times*. This montage of attention-grabbing phrases in the centre of each image clashes with the underlying depiction of well-ordered wealth, denoting status, success and, on occasion, history. The artist's collaborator, Trent Walker, describes the relationship between text and image as a 'relationship of conflict and power in an international context, and the implied dislocation between those responsible for the conflict and those who are the victims of it'.[10] The works visually connect the owners of the displayed wealth with contemporary conflict.

The print series was made in Andrew's studio in

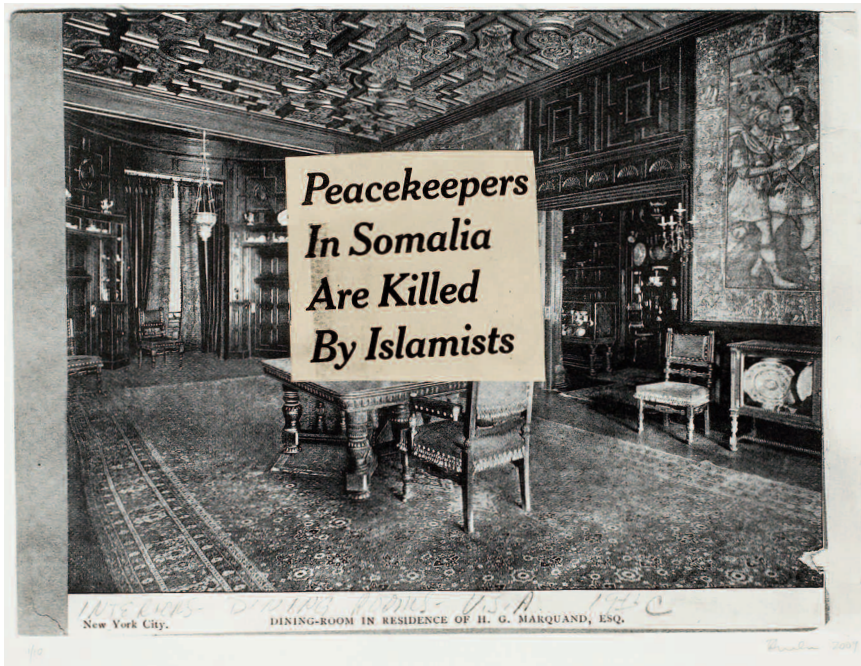
7 P. Craswell 'Brook Andrew: Hope and Peace' (review of 2005 exhibition in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide), *ARTLINK*, XXV, 2005, no 4. Available online, at www.artlink.com.au/articles/2258/brook-andrew-hope-26-peace/, accessed 3 September 2015.

8 ISPC – International Studio and Curatorial Program, see A. Rawlings, 'Archives of the Invisible', *ART AsiaPacific,* LXVIII, May–June 2010, p. 110.

9 Email to author, 22 June 2015.

10 B. Andrew and T. Walter,'Copying Collaboration: A Dialogue between Brook Andrew and Trent Walter' in L. Morgan, *Intersections and Counterpoints: Proceedings of the Impact 7 International Multi-Disciplinary Printmaking Conference,* Clayton, OH, 2013, p. 3.

2. Brook Andrew, *Envoy Denies Immunity Offer to Leader of Bosnian Serbs*, 2009, screenprint, image 2,020 x 1,430 mm (Melbourne, Monash University Museum).



3. Brook Andrew, *Peacekeepers in Somalia are Killed by Islamists*, 2009, lithograph with chine collé, sheet 480 x 550 mm (Melbourne, Monash University Museum).

Melbourne in late October and November 2009. For the two mokuhanga prints, the artist commissioned Japanese master blockcutter Shoichi Kitamura to translate the magazine images into woodblock (figs. **##4** and **##5**).[11] In delegating the execution of the work to a specialist, Andrew followed a trend common in artistic production today: the artist selects, orders and places rather than makes, a process referred to as 'deskilling' by the British art historian John Roberts.[12] The work is then made by somebody else, typically a known expert in some technique, a skilled craftsman; again, a common twentieth-century phenomenon. Andrew is typical of the artist as producer, in the sense of having a directive, managerial function, referred to as 'reskilling' by Roberts. This is apparent from his keynote conversation at the *IMPACT 7* International fellow Australian Printmaking Conference in Melbourne in 2011 with printmaker Trent Walter.[13] Both conceive of their relationship as a collaborative enterprise, although the resulting works of art are exhibited under Andrew's name.

The translation into woodblock of newspaper headlines and photographs from magazines reintroduces an element of craft into a mechanical, mass-produced image. Yet, paradoxically, this crafting of the image appears, at first glance, entirely inconspicuous. On seeing the woodcuts, many viewers are likely to be uncertain as to what they are looking at in printmaking terms.[14] Only by reading the caption is the print identified as a woodcut, which then affects how the viewer experiences the image. Although Andrew has not directly commented on the precise rationale for using three different print techniques – screenprinting, lithography and mokuhanga – he states the importance of the technical process as characteristic of his artistic practice. Achieving the intricate detail and fine tonal gradation of the original photographic image in the two mokuhanga presented considerable challenges even for such an experienced craftsman as Kitamura, as Andrew observed: 'It made me smile when he [Kitamura] went to his master, Akira Kurosaki, and said "How can

[11] Western style name order, with given name followed by family name, is used throughout this article. See the artist's blog with images: https://brookandrew.wordpress.com/?s=kitamura, accessed 13 January 2015.

[12] J. Roberts, *The Intangibilities of Form: Skill and Deskilling in Art after the Readymade,* London, 2007, p. 88.

[13] Morgan, op. cit., pp. 2–6.

[14] The author saw the print series on the occasion of the IMPACT 7 International Printmaking Conference 2011, held at Monash University, Melbourne. Having recently been acquired for the Monash University collection, they were exhibited in the campus gallery.

I make a woodblock print from this photo-collage?" His master replied: "Experiment!" This amused me, and Kitamura too.'[15] Andrew further commented:

> This was a very interesting process for Kitamura … [His master's response] pushed Kitamura to create a process through sampling (A4-size tests). Kitamura sent through [to Melbourne] around four different examples of the process and I selected one. This is when Kitamura cut the entire set of six to seven double-sided blocks per final print. Though because Kitamura was printing the work in my studio in Melbourne (for three months) he was able to adjust some blocks and carve new sections when needed. We then discussed in collaboration the style of wash and contrast etc. for each print … This was all done collaboratively when Kitamura was in my studio. We both agreed early on, in the initial A4 testing phase, that it's best he came to Australia and we were close to each other every day of the printing … Kitamura also saw all of the collages I made [the other images in the *Danger of Authority* series] and this helped him greatly understand my process and reason for making these two works into woodblock.

Andrew also mentions how he, Walter and Kitamura tackled the language barriers:

> We used our limited Japanese/English skills, but after Kitamura was in Australia for three months, his English and our Japanese was much better! Trent and I work closely together and hence the unity or a community would be the best way to describe Kitamura and Trent's collaboration with me here. [16]

Kitamura himself explained some of the printing techniques he used:

> I used various types of 'bokashi'. 'Bokashi' is a gradation of colour technique. The bokashi techniques I used include 'atenashi bokashi' (shadow portions) and 'ita bokashi' (block gradation) for the rug in *Even a Failing Mind Feels the Tug of History* and in *Legions of War Widows Face Dire Need in Iraq* around the fireplace stones. I also used the embossing technique in *Legions*.[17]

By re-presenting mass media images in unusual formats and in three different sizes, all larger than the original journal page, and by heightening the aesthetic qualities of the mundane source images through the different printing techniques, Andrew draws the viewer's attention to the process by which these works were created.

But there is more at stake here. It can be argued that mokuhanga re-introduces a labour requirement that is more demanding than lithography and screenprint, where the prints are obtained with the help of photomechanical reproduction. The two images required six to seven blocks which were carved on both sides. 35 to 38 trial impressions were counted by Andrew and Walter. Kitamura reckons he printed each woodblock, which can carry several image elements, three to four times, so the figures given by Andrew and Walter and Kitamura himself (6 or 7 times 2 times 3 or 4 = 36 or 56) roughly correspond.[18] These monochrome images required many more blocks and impressions than even a complex traditional Japanese colour woodblock, which on average would consist of up to twenty blocks, one for each colour.[19] Also, when I expressed my admiration for his work to Kitamura, he remarked that although Andrew had hoped to reproduce further images by means of the woodcut, he (Kitamura) declined, due to the difficulty and tremendous amount of time required even to make two such prints.[20]

The pasted-on and crudely cut newspaper headline introduces an incongruity into the source image that hints at clashing values and conflicting political worlds. The old-fashioned historical interiors combine with contemporary headlines to assert that the power structures and the economic, political and social systems that underpin the visual affluence of the past persist to this day. The straplines expressly hint at the social and political costs of such systems. Andrew's prints with their recognizable reference to the media also remind us of the economic value that the media themselves represent. After all, we not only consume material goods but also to an ever-increasing degree the products of media and communication. Finally, in relation to the role of skill in contemporary art, Roberts has argued that while some artists 'may choose to be master of a given technical process – the manipulation of digital photographs, or weaving', this 'does not determine our judgement of the artist's skill overall'.[21] The final assessment rests with the conceptual aspect of the work. For this, a certain craft or skill may well be essential, but it does not have to be the artist's own.

If Andrew highlights issues of labour that permeate

[15] Andrew and Walter, op. cit., p. 6.

[16] Email to author, 19 June 2015.

[17] Email to author, 22 June 2015. Translation of all email correspondence with Shoichi Kitamura by Claire Cuccio. For further explanations of these techniques of blockcutting and printing, see Salter, 2001, op. cit., pp. 98–110.

[18] Email correspondences with Andrew, 19 June 2015, and Kitamura, 22 June 2015, respectively.

[19] *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History,* www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ukiy/hd_ukiy.htm, accessed 20 June 2015.

[20] Conversation at the 2014 'International Mokuhanga Conference' in Tokyo.

[21] Roberts, op. cit., pp. 92–93.

4. Brook Andrew, *Legions of War Widows Face Dire Need in Iraq*, 2009, woodblock print, 970 x 670 mm (Melbourne, Monash University Museum).

today's society, in Salter's project *Quadra 1–4*, of 2010, a different type of labour is involved (figs. ##6–##9). On the surface, it appears to be far removed from the social and political concerns of Andrew's piece. After her initial education studying ceramics in Bristol, Salter received a scholarship to study raku ceramics in Kyoto.

5. Brook Andrew, *Even a Failing Mind Feels the Tug of History*, 2009, woodblock print, 970 x 670 mm (Melbourne, Monash University Museum).

She spent six years in Japan, from 1979 to 1985. Before she arrived, her teacher Yagi Kazuo died and she also 'realised that [she] had the wrong temperament for ceramics'. She had to stay in the university because of the scholarship and therefore worked in ceramics, but also learned Japanese woodcut from acknowledged

post-war master and university professor Akira Kurosaki. Immersing herself fully in Japanese artistic practices, she travelled around the country and learnt about papermaking and calligraphy.[22] Despite her own competence, Salter's more recent woodcut series *Sky,* of 2008, and *Quadra* were executed by the Sato workshop, a respected mokuhanga specialist in Kyoto. Kitamura, who also maintains his own studio, was working at the Sato workshop at the time *Quadra* was undertaken. Unlike Andrew, for whom woodcut is only one possible medium among many, Salter's work is based on a thorough interrogation of the medium she uses, indicating the influence of Japanese attitudes. Forrester writes: 'The inherently Western concept of the artist as a creative genius is alien to traditional Japanese artistic practice, where stress is laid on the importance of mastery or skill through repetition, attention to detail, and sheer diligence'.[23] In the Western context, such values challenge the conflicted attitudes towards craft, skill and materials that underlay much of twentieth-century art, especially since the post-war period.

Several authors have emphasized that Salter's use of and response to materials and processes in making a work reflect a Japanese outlook.[24] In her paintings, Salter's often grid-like structure is characterized by multiple layers of paint that are frequently scraped off and combined with drawn marks, confirming her interest in calligraphy. Through repetitive action these techniques lead to the accumulation of 'tacit knowledge', to use a term popularized by Donald Schön, that is, the building up of experiential knowledge, of, for example, where and how much paint to scrape off, almost without thinking or paying attention.[25] At the same time, there is the necessity for the artist to be acutely present in the actual moment, to respond to what is 'there', namely the changing properties of the material object with which she is engaged. Yet, a forceful and intentional directing of the process is rejected. Salter refers to this mode of working as 'a state of skilled "unknowing"', an attitude counter to the persistent notion of artistic genius.[26]

The *Quadra* prints were preceded by another series of four prints, *Sky I to Sky IV*, of 2008. This was Salter's first collaboration with the Sato workshop, during which she was based in London and the craftsmen in Kyoto. These prints had been commissioned by Salter on the basis of the original drawings. Besides the commercial appeal that many print projects hold for artists, Salter was also attracted to the project by her interest in the dying craft of mokuhanga. In the early and mid-2000s, while researching her two books on Japanese woodcuts, *Japanese Woodblock Prints* and *Japanese Popular Prints: From Votive Slips to Playing Cards* (Honolulu, 2006), Salter conducted extensive interviews with its practitioners, the recordings of which are currently held at the Sasakewa Foundation in London.[27] The *Sky* prints were made with scant consultation between artist and workshop, or even her presence, and she was only sent some proofs.[28] As Salter explains, the print project was inspired by her admiration for the special Kyoto technique of 'reproducing' nihonga (traditional Japanese) paintings in print. Kyoto print workshops are known for their extraordinary skill at reproducing 'especially the soft wash/water colour areas' of these paintings.[29] Since Salter's drawings equally rely on passages of subtly modulated washes, this specialty of Kyoto mokuhanga craftsmen held great appeal for her.

After the successful collaboration with the Sato workshop on the *Sky* series, Salter embarked on the *Quadra* project (fig. **#10**), of which she said, 'I had an initial meeting where we discussed possibilities (limited because of my budget) and then I left them [the Sato workshop] to get on with it. And of course the first proofs were spot on.' Salter has pointed out that the craftsmen 'could have made them even more delicate, if I'd been able to afford a few extra blocks/printings', implying that the artist's skill lies also in choosing the right expert rather than a direct involvement in making the work.

Salter wrote that she wanted:

> to produce something especially for the Yale show (the building is made up of cube/squares) and also I felt that it would be a way of bringing a little bit of Japan into the show and hopefully expanding the audience for what mokuhanga is now.[30]

The overall liquid appearance of the *Quadra* drawings, including the subtle shading surrounding the ink lines, is especially noticeable. These veils arise from the bleeding of the finely drawn lines into small blustery shapes on the wetted paper. The translation of the subtlety of the drawings to the recalcitrant medium of wood was achieved via the accomplished cutting techniques of

[22] Email from Salter to the author, 7 June 2015.

[23] *Into the Light of Things*, op. cit., pp. 8–9.

[24] See the essays by Forrester, Borchardt-Hume and Okhi in *Into the Light of Things*, op. cit.

[25] The term 'tacit knowledge', originally coined by the philosopher Michael Polyani in 1967, was popularized by D. Schön in: *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, London, 1983.

[26] Salter quoted in: *Into the Light of Things*, op. cit., p. 59.

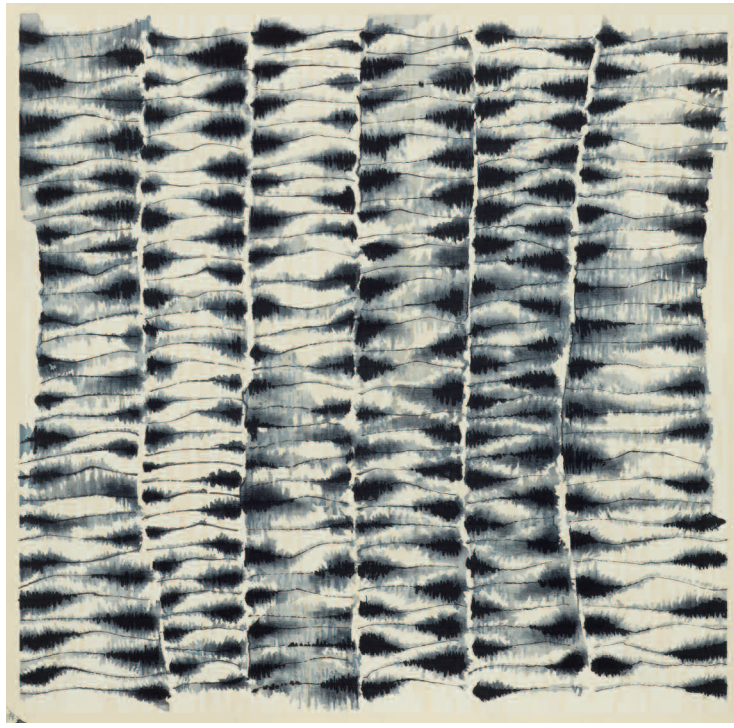
[27] 'Japanese Woodblock Print Archive – Rebecca Salter' available at: www.gbsf.org.uk/activities/e/art.html, accessed 13 January 2015.

[28] Email correspondence with the author, 13 January 2015.

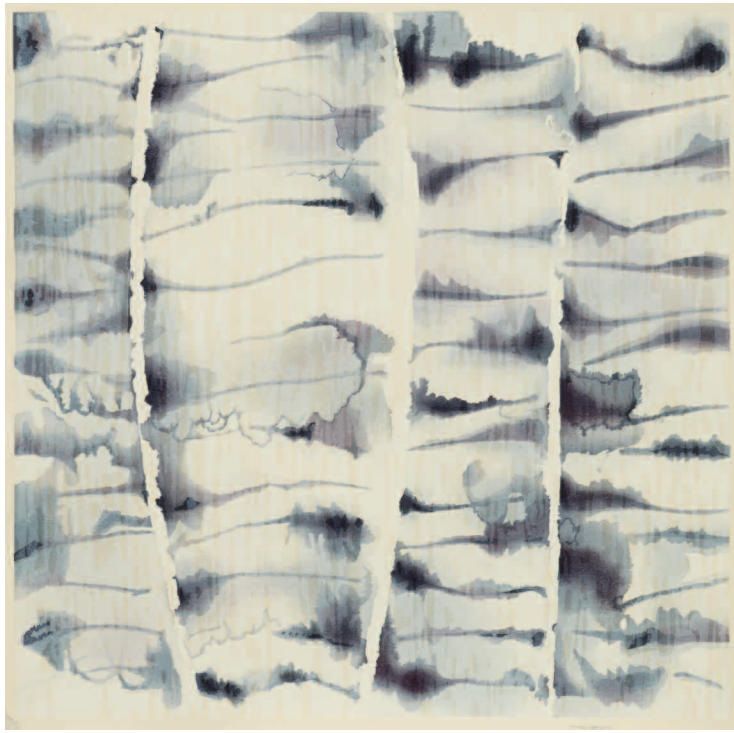
[29] Ibid., and Salter, 2001, op. cit. pp. 12–13.

[30] Quotes from email correspondence with the author, 13 January 2015.

6. Rebecca Salter, *Quadra 1*, 2010, woodblock print, 300 x 300 mm (Courtesy the artist).

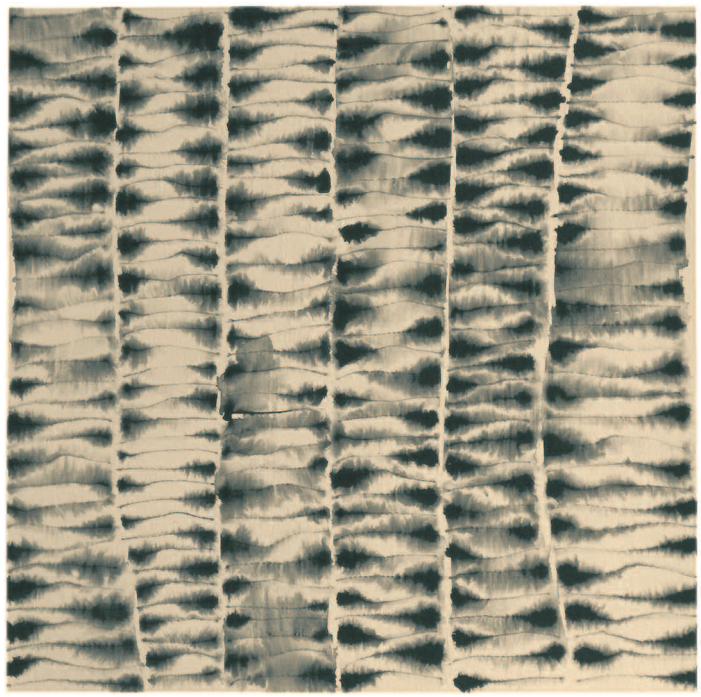


7. Rebecca Salter, *Quadra 2*, 2010, woodblock print, 300 x 300 mm (Courtesy the artist).



8. Rebecca Salter, *Quadra 3*, 2010, woodblock print, 300 x 300 mm (Courtesy the artist).

9. Rebecca Salter, *Quadra 4*, 2010, woodblock print, 300 x 300 mm (Courtesy the artist).



10. Rebecca Salter, *Quadra 2 Drawing*, 2010, watercolour, 300 x 300 mm (Courtesy the artist).

the two master blockcutters, Kitamura and Hiroshi Fujisawa, and the finesse of printer Makoto Nakayama in printing the four blocks for each print. Kitamura and Fujisawa each carved two of the images. Fujisawa cut the very fine dark block for *Quadra 2* using cherrywood because the lines were too fine for plywood. In general, plywood blocks were used because they were both less expensive and easier to cut, and the edition was small.[31] Japanese print specialist Claire Cuccio highlights the different approaches taken by each blockcutter, depending on their age, training and outlook:

> Senior master carver Fujisawa Hiroshi, who became an apprentice woodblock carver at the age of thirteen only a few years after World War II … says his comprehension of Salter's work is mediated by his training as a traditional artisan. Adamant that he lacks sufficient knowledge of contemporary art to fully appreciate Salter's work, he credits his Buddhist beliefs for enabling him to maintain proper conduct (kōdō) in order to produce his high-quality work … [He] is quick to acknowledge that what he sees as vestiges of traditional Japanese aesthetics in Salter's paintings allow him to interpret her work. Her asymmetrical contours; bold, scapular lines; and flourishes and fusions of light and dark all seem familiar to him as traditional aesthetics that run through calligraphy and ink painting. Through these resonances, he gains confidence to cut Salter's paintings into wood.[32]

Kitamura, by contrast, is a graduate in woodblock print of Kyoto Seika University's art department, a programme launched by Kurosaki in 1987. In addition to his collaboration with Brook Andrew he has worked with other artists internationally. Cuccio writes:

> Kitamura represents a contemporary variation of the artisan; unlike his senior Fujisawa, he consciously recognizes his roles as both artist and artisan. Moreover, he inherently understands the abstraction that pervades contemporary art and the infinite interpretations it invites. His selection of commonplace veneer plywood for his carving, he explains, though a far different medium from the tight, smooth mountain cherry preferred in traditional Japanese woodblock printing, better suits the expressionistic effects in Salter's work. Although Kitamura is also an experienced printer, in

[31] Email from the artist, 7 June 2015.

[32] C. Cuccio, 'When a Copy is an Original – the Sat Woodblock Print Workshop and Rebecca Salter', *The Journal of Modern Craft*, August 2010, http://journalofmoderncraft.com/author/claire-cuccio, accessed 12 December 2014. Although Cuccio discusses the *Quadra* project, she uses the word 'painting' rather than 'drawing' to refer to Salter's 'originals'. Japanese name order is used in the article.

11. Rebecca Salter, *Untitled RR21*, 2009, mixed media on linen, 1,100 x 900 mm (Courtesy the artist).

> his carving, he concerns himself only with the microsecond decisions necessary to capture Salter's originals on his blocks, leaving the effects of his blocks in the printing process up to Satō [Satō Keizō, owner of the eponymous workshop] to resolve.[33]

Despite the differences between the two blockcutters, they share the discipline, attention to detail and sheer labour needed for rendering Salter's painting process.

The printing was executed by Makoto Nakayama, and Salter has expressed her enthusiasm for the master printer's ability to apply the critical judgement, hand-eye co-ordination, speed and manual dexterity – even delicacy – that is necessary to execute the registration of the different blocks and the printing itself. As indicated above, mokuhanga colours are water-based. They are therefore highly susceptible to even slight

[33] Ibid.

changes in room temperature and humidity levels and require constant adjustment to (or of) the working environment, as noted for the collaboration between Andrew and Kitamura. The colour is mixed with nori paste and the particular qualities of Japanese paper are essential to this type of printing.[34]

One wonders if viewers would respond to the prints in the same way if they had been produced in a different medium, as screenprints or lithography, for example. Because these latter techniques entail a photomechanical process, the volume and the type of labour and skill would be unlike that needed for woodcut, which demands a close involvement of the hand and of 'touch'. Indeed, in order to recreate the original spontaneity of the drawing, as well as the accidental material effects of ink blooms, both the blockcutters and printer have to exert physical and mental labour that far exceeds the original labour of drawing as with Andrew's project.

The *Quadra* images appear almost as a musical notation of that most fundamental of physical activities, breathing. The 'all over' quality of the four sheets suggests neither a beginning nor an end, but a mere snapshot out of a continuum. This association is confirmed by Ohki's comments on the quality of some of Salter's drawn lines in relation to traditional Japanese calligraphy: 'The lively horizontal lines have "breath" ('ki' in Japanese; 'qi' in Chinese) in each stroke, and such vitality is further emphasised by the ample space around each line'.[35] Although these remarks are made about the painting *Untitled RR21*, of 2009 (fig. **#11**), the association with breath or breathing also holds for the *Quadra* prints. In practical terms, the horizontal lines in the Quadra series appear to stem from the so-called 'Nr 1 stroke' or 'ichi' of Japanese calligraphy.[36] They follow vertical, invisible boundary lines that result in a column-like sequence. The starting point of each horizontal line is in the reverse direction from the previous one. The resultant tadpole-like shapes opposite each other could be read as markers of the fullness of the inhalation of breath, followed by its duration and the mirror movement of the exhalation. Like each breath, in terms of width, dimension, length and placement, no line is the same.

The difference between the four *Quadra* images arises from the variation of density in both the vertical columns and horizontal lines. The background of two of the images is dark blue, for the other two it is off-white. Each blue or off-white pair consists of an 'airier' version where the lines and columns are broadly cast and a 'denser' or tighter one, which nonetheless maintains a sinuous fluidity. The four images can be related to Salter's tendency to work in diptychs, and a similar division into darker and lighter, paired sheets can be found, for instance, in the *Sky* prints. Such a working method brings to mind Salter's avoidance of binary either/or thinking, conceiving instead of light and dark, positive and negative, as complementary to each other. It could also be associated with her position as a 'border walker' between Western and Japanese artistic traditions, between 'different disciplines, cultural reference points and modes of engagement'.[37] Yet, Salter's pronounced two-fold cultural reference points could be seen as problematic. In the critical debates of the last 40 years, references to cultures that were historically perceived as 'exotic' in the West have at times been regarded as perpetuating postcolonial attitudes. A more positive view, however, is proposed by Alexandra Munroe. Following Takeuchi Yoshimi's formulation of 'Asia as a method', she describes encounters between Western artists and the East as a 'scenario in which Western cultural and political practices can be inflected by Eastern ones while both retain their own value systems'.[38] This definitely seems to be the case here.

Salter's and Andrew's projects show, in different ways, how artistic skill has become linked to the 'process of conceptualisation' (Roberts) as a major feature of art over the last 50 years. In Salter's case, her selection of craftsmen is informed by her deep knowledge and understanding of mokuhanga, as well as her approach to making art. She is therefore able to place confidence in particular craftsmen's ability to translate the very distinctive aesthetic of her drawings, which are inflected by Japanese values and methods.

Andrew's choice of mokuhanga for his *Danger of Authority* series and the employment of the Japanese craftsman/artist results in an extraordinary feat of labour, in terms of the very specific skills, time and knowledge bestowed on production of the two woodcuts. The intense techniques that are implied by the rich and sensuous qualities of the prints fly in the face of everyday digital imaging technologies, especially photographs, that appear to be effortlessly instantaneous and automatic. Both artists aim to stop viewers in their tracks – albeit for different ends and by different means – and their choice of mokuhanga is vital in this.

[34] In conversation with the author, June 2015. For details of media, see Salter, 2001, op. cit., pp. 26–33 and 36–46.

[35] Ohki, op. cit., p. 26.

[36] Ibid.

[37] A. Borchardt-Hume, 'On the Surface of Things', in *Into the Light of Things*, op. cit., p. 34.

[38] As quoted in *Into the Light of Things*, op. cit., p. 9.